

the Nation. We wish her all the very best as she enjoys a well-earned retirement to her home in Falls Church, VA, and on her beloved shores of Bethany Beach, DE, with her husband Mike and children, Luke and Molly.

RECOGNIZING WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, this week marks the 125th anniversary of the first week of classes at Weber State University, and I would like to take a moment to officially recognize this valued Utah institution.

In the mid-1800s, pioneers from the Mormon Church, also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, settled an area 35 miles north of Salt Lake City, known as the Weber Valley. The surrounding area, including the Weber River, was earlier named in honor of John Henry Weber, a noted frontier trapper with the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

As our country continued westward expansion, it became necessary to create territorial governments. During this expansive period, Congress passed the Compromise of 1850, part of which created the Utah Territory. The territorial government oversaw general administrative matters, including the establishment of schools, during the latter half of the 19th century. The region experienced an increase in population, as Mormons and non-Mormons alike came to further settle the West. With the driving of the golden spike at nearby promontory summit in 1869, the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad brought tremendous economic growth to the Weber Valley.

As the Mormon settlers grew in numbers and cultivated the land, they also created institutions of learning for themselves and their children. In 1888, members of the Mormon Church were encouraged by their leaders to institute local boards of education to oversee the creation of schools that could teach the principles of religion in conjunction with the standard curriculum of the day.

In 1889, the regional group of Mormon congregations, known as the Weber Stake of Zion, started the Weber Stake Academy for the education of local students who had passed the sixth grade. The school was "open to students of either sex, and of any religious denomination or nationality." The mission of the academy was "to provide an education which includes moral culture, as well as mental and physical training." Courses were offered in theology, business, pedagogy and psychology, languages, English and literature, natural and physical science, mathematics, history, and political science.

The school grew in notoriety and enrollment over the following 20 years. In 1918, it was renamed "Weber Normal College" and subsequently "Weber College," as the institution eventually dropped all preparatory and high school education to focus on college-

level education. During the first few decades of the 20th century, the famed purple and white were chosen as school colors, and the wildcat was apparently adopted as the school mascot after a reporter dubbed the football players "scrappy as a bunch of wildcats."

As the 1920s closed, the Great Depression began to take shape and Weber College, like all other institutions at the time, did not foresee the financial calamity that would befall her. After a few years of struggle, the Weber College Board, in conjunction with the church's Board of Education, transferred the school to the State of Utah in 1933. The subsequent years were very difficult for faculty and students, but the junior college persevered and continued to mold good citizens.

The school carried along and grew in size as the Depression subsided. With the attack on Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into World War II, Weber College's faculty and students did all that they could to support the war efforts. Many students joined the armed forces, and the school helped in training naval cadets and radio operators for the military.

Because of the war, mostly women attended the school, and they "had to hold things down until the fellows returned to campus," as one alumna recalled. In 1945, the school even held a dance called the "Polygamist Prance," which was girl's choice. To make sure that all the girls could attend, the boys were to accept all requests for a date. Many boys showed up at the dance with 5 or 10 dates, and even though such a ration was unfair to the girls, the students had a great time.

Although it was a tremendously difficult time for the entire country, Weber College students, showing the spirit of America's greatest generation, exhibited principled leadership and courage through the storm of World War II. In all, 82 faculty and alumni did not return from Europe or the Pacific, and all were profoundly affected by the great and terrible conflict.

As the war came to a close, Weber prepared for the return of many soldiers who were anxious to go to college. Enrollment exploded from 465 students in 1945 to over 2,000 students in 1959, and 3,000 students in 1962. During this time of expansion, the Utah Legislature directed the State board of education to find a new place for the burgeoning school. The college was subsequently moved from downtown Ogden to Harrison Boulevard, where it currently resides today.

In 1959, the men's basketball team, an ever-formidable force, won the Junior College National Championship. In that same year, the Utah Legislature passed a bill allowing Weber College to become a 4-year senior college, and the first courses contributing to 4-year degrees were offered in 1962. The next year, Weber College became Weber State College, and the campus was greatly expanded during this time.

Weber continued to grow and progress as Weber State College over

the subsequent 30 years, and in 1991 Weber State College was made Weber State University. The university now has more than 26,000 full- and part-time students and offers more than 250 undergraduate degrees and 11 graduate degrees. The athletic programs continue to be ranked among the best in their divisions, and the arts at Weber State continue to enrich the lives of many Utahns.

President Charles A. Wright now continues the tradition of excellence in leadership, which has been passed down for 125 years. Weber State boasts many notable alumni, and the institution continues to fulfill its mission to serve "as an educational, cultural, and economic leader for the region."

Although I normally bleed blue, I have set aside this week to bleed purple with my Wildcat friends and colleagues. I congratulate the countless students and faculty members who have worked hard to make Weber State University what it is today. May the next 125 years be as tremendous as the last, and may the ensign of truth and right continue to proudly wave o're ole Weber.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT DANIEL VASSELIAN

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life and service of U.S. Marine Sgt. Daniel Vasselien, who was killed in the line of duty on December 23, 2013 while conducting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan. Sergeant Vasselien was assigned to 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C., and was serving his third tour of duty when he was killed at the young age of 27.

"Danny", as he was known by family and friends, was a proud son of the small Massachusetts town of Abington, where he was known as a kind, courageous and fun-loving young man. Danny graduated from Abington High School in 2004, and was fortunate to have already met the love of his life, Erin, whom he went on to marry. Erin and Danny celebrated their fourth wedding anniversary in December. A tribute to his standing in Abington, thousands of people lined the town's streets to escort Sergeant Vasselien's casket to the funeral service.

In 2006, Sergeant Vasselien enlisted with the Marines and was assigned to 2/3 Echo Company Infantry, eventually deploying to tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. The heroism and professionalism of Sergeant Vasselien and his Marine Corps units merited numerous awards, including a Purple Heart Award, a Combat Action Ribbon, a Presidential Unit Citation and a Navy Unit Commendation. Sergeant Vasselien's love for his Marine brothers was infallible, and ultimately led him to volunteer for the mission that cost him his life.

Sergeant Vasselien's outsized personality and good heartedness will not